DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 051 234 TE 002 451

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TITLE	Cooperative Involvement of Administrator-Supervisor-Teacher Is the "Right Mix" for Inservice Training.
PUB DATE	Nov 70
NOTE	11p.; Speech given at the Annual Convention of the National Council of Teachers of English (60th, Atlanta, November 1970)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Cooperative Planning, *Elementary School Curriculum, *English Programs, *Inservice Teacher Education, *Pilot Projects
IDENTIFIERS	Baltimore County, Maryland

ABSTRACT

As an outcome of a pilot in-service training course in newer approaches to English-language teaching, an EPDA Basic Studies Project for in-service training in elementary language arts was begun in Baltimore County Schools. The people who were involved in a cooperative effort included college consultants, administrators, staff supervisors and instructors, and teachers. (DB)

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Speech for Atlanta Meeting: Jean C. Sisk, Baltimore County Schools

COOPERATIVE INVOLVEMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR-SUPERVISOR-TEACHER IS THE "RIGHT MIX" FOR INSERVICE TRAINING

The title of this talk, as printed in the program, is too long. It could have and, in the interests of accuracy, should have been longer--to include all the individuals and institutions that must be involved in planning, developing, and implementing inservice opportunities for teachers--the college and university specialists in subject matter and methodology, the professional organizations, state and federal government agencies, the local community resources, the students, the parents. And not only is the title both too long and too short, the word "right" is dogmatic and, in a sense, misleading. There is, of course, no "right mix" of personnel, materials, and resources for inservice training, only more or less appropriate and successful patterns of cooperation among the individuals and groups just enumerated.

As in the field of nutrition, to continue for a moment the metaphor suggested in the title, the "right mix" depends upon the guests who're invited to dinner, the people who're planning the meal, the menu decided upon within the currently fashionable cuisines, and permissible limits of the budget, and--when the cook gets going, the correct proportions of ingredients for the various courses of the meal. We all know that some dishes require less exactness in proportion than others; we can add that touch of garlic if our guests enjoy it--or we can omit it. A touch of rosemary, or a heavy hand of nutmeg may be a matter of taste. We may use a little more flour than is needed to make a dough, and we can still produce an edible product; but if we put twice as much flour, or twice as much lard, our pie ends in the disposal.

The Elements in Determining the "Right Mix"

The public school educational cuisine is more nearly the cuisine of a large, non-profit chain of cafeterias and restaurants for public-service buildings or highways than the more limited or choice cuisine of a single household or hotel. The menu has to be diversified, not too costly, wholesome enough to meet standard nutrition requirements, and attractive enough to keep the customers satisfied. And frequently the managers, cooks, and customers

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are limited by the size of the institution and the availability of resources--both hardware and the edible-expendable stuff that goes into it and the talents of the various personnel on the staff. In small places, machines furnished and stocked by industries outside the community provide at least a balanced meal--though one that probably never quite pleases everyone. In the Senate dining rooms, on the other hand, there's a much wider choice, more expertly prepared and more "individualized" in appeal. And there are all sorts of combinations in between. All of them must be in a process of growth and change, however, or they'll lose their customers, cut corners, and offer more and more limited choices. That's one place, incidentally, where the human managers and cooks can make the greatest difference; it takes longer for a machine that functions alike for all parts of the world to change its offerings in response to local tastes. Machines can't hear (unless there's a tape for customer reactions attached); they can't see; and so their perceptions of the need for change are limited. The professionals in charge of the kitchens, the dining rooms, rest rooms, and cash registers must know something about all the operations, but they do not necessarily have to be specialists in Southern cooking, or pre-natal nutrition, or furniture design. They should have enough background to know when to call in experts in these fields; and they should be responsive to the tastes and needs of their customers.

Applied to schools instead of restaurants, the preceding statements imply that the "right mix" of personnel, hardware, and expendables to produce the menu appropriate for the range of students and teachers in a given community depends on the perceptions of those hired to provide the needed services, the satisfaction and support of the recipients of these services, and the resources available to do the job. Let's look at four cases where some sort of on-the-job offerings are neded in school systems of different sorts, with different needs for the English programs. As you read each one over, try to come up with a solution for their problem in terms of personnel involvement from college, school staff, administrators or supervisors, teachers, parents, students, community and professional groups, state and federal agencies or projects, and educational industries such as textbook publishers, producers of hardware and programs.

Case A

Situation: Small school district with stable faculty in high school; principal also supervises. No supervision for experienced teachers; no provision for funds to attend conferences. Local teacher education college supervises and plans preservice training with no attempt to involve local school. No extension course offerings except in summer, at university 70 miles distant.

A member of the School Board attends a conference at which a NCTE staff member discusses trends in more open classrooms, more student involvement--small group work, individualized reading. He is dissatisfied with his own child's experiences in a teacher-dominated English class and so he suggests that the English department in the high school begin to apply some of the newer methods.

Case B

Situation: A large school system with high teacher salaries and competent staff, but with no support for curriculum development workshops where committees are paid for their work, sends a new curriculum bulletin to the NCTE Curriculum Commission for Review. The evaluation points up a great need for a greater emphasis on contemporary and controversial materials in literature for the secondary English program, including related visual media. There is a powerful community group that opposes any but the most time-honored classics. College consultants are available, but have not been asked to help because no honoraria are furnished. Most teachers have had some interest in using more contemporary materials, however. Supervisors are sympathetic.

Case C

Situation: A small but well-supported school district becomes alarmed when reading levels on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills show a median for grade 9 one-half to one level below national norms. The supervisor of high school subjects (there is only one supervisor) is not a reading specialist, but suggests that teachers follow a packaged program he has learned of through a sales representative. One of the high school counselors who has had some training in reading opposes this idea and suggests that the entire problem of the relation of reading to content areas, especially to English, be studied before any specific measures are taken.

Case D

Situation: Large school system; 130,000 pupils. 100 elementary schools; 40 secondary schools. Well-supported by middle-class metropolitan suburbs and suburban industry. Long history of curriculum development and state-accredited inservice courses. Twenty-six years of curriculum workshops during summers, with pay for teacher-participants. Highly trained staff in Central Division of Instruction and Curriculum in leadership role. Nearby teacher-training institutions of all types, from converted "normal schools" to academic institutions offering doctorates in all fields, including education.

Training Problem: Need to provide subject matter background and appropriate methodology to 2000 elementary teachers and administrators, following production of innovative curriculum in language arts by teams of teachers, supervisors, administrators, and consultants and pilot stage success in over ten elementary schools.

Available Resources:

Assets: Staff skilled in methods and with more than adequate subject competencies; history of inservice work; favorable attitudes of teachers; community support;

college consultants in subject matter

Liabilities: Prohibitive cost of offering sufficient inservice work (for 2000 in 2 to 3 years; lack of interest of nearby training institution for elementary teachers; insistence of colleges on prerequisites for taking courses in linguistics, semantics, history of English--and fields related to innovative materials; few commercially produced materials appropriate to program needs.

School-Administered, Federally-Funded: Experiment in Large-Scale Inservice Training

As you can see from even an informal exchange of ideas among people reacting to these problems in inservice training, there are no panaceas and no single methods for finding that magic combination of talents needed. There are probably no really ideal solutions available to any of us, just relatively productive ways of working things out in a pragmatic way--knowing that all things educational and nutritional are always in transition and that what we work out today will, if we perpetuate it, become just as unpalatable as other plans we might now reject. It happens, however, that Case Study D provides the background for a particular inservice training problem related to the subject in elementary language arts with which I am associated in the Baltimore County Schools, funded by the government for the past two years under the EPDA Basic Studies Program. It is one of the comparatively few Basic Studies Projects where grants have been awarded directly to local school systems instead of to colleges and universities. The project is described in some detail in the brochure, "The English Language in Elementary School Programs: An EPDA Inservice Training Project", which is available on request (with twenty-five cents for handling) to the Baltimore County Schools, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, 6901 N. Charles Street, Towson, Maryland 21204*

The major justifications for seeking federal funds were (1) the prohibitive cost of massive inservice training programs involving over a thousand teachers and administrators--even for a well-to-do system, able to underwrite a fairly extensive inservice program of its own; (2) the understanding that the federal government was seeking projects in elementary teacher education and in systems large enough to serve as organizational "models" for other

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* This brochure will be distributed at the Atlanta meeting so that it may be referred to occasionally during this talk.

large systems; (3) the awareness that the innovative nature of the curriculum materials and subject matter on which the training program was based would lose its self-motivating novelty unless the training program were instituted and implemented quickly; and (4) the opportunity to demonstrate ways to improve articulation of program and teacher-preparation made imperative in our County by a revision of the secondary school English program, 7-12, begun when we abandoned the English-within-Core junior high school program we had had for some years. I should tell you also that the County had, in 1966, begun a school staff reorganization moving from a K-6, 7-12 set-up to a K-12 staffing in subject offices as well as general curriculum and administrative offices, so that there was a "readiness" for K-6, 7-12 articulation that had been absent before.

Groundwork in Previous Secondary School Programs

The impetus for the original curriculum development of which the inservice project is a part came originally from the staff of the English Office and from schools where the teacher-committees involved in the revision of the secondary program were working. During the revision, the problem arose of what to do with the "language" strand of the program--the knowledge of and attitudes about language itself as differentiated from the literature in that language and the oral and written composing in that language. We were, of course, not the only school system faced with a problem in English somewhat similar to the problem presented by the "new math" or the "new" subject matter or methodology in any subject field. We organized committees of teachers with some knowledge of the field, hired college consultants, examined the literature, sought help from other school systems--the usual things one does when getting organized to find solutions to problems. We finally arrived at an agreement to keep the language strand in a state of transitional development, pending more solid agreements among linguistic scholars and more usable materials from publishers. And we wrote our own activities and short "units" for secondary school, attempting as we worked in our summer workshops and year-long committee meetings, to integrate the language strand with the other components of the program--where integration was possible--and to suggest

ways of teaching language directly (grammar especially). The decisions we made and the activities we provided were the result of cooperative effort on the part of supervisors, administrators with some knowledge in the field--limited in number, admittedly--teachers, and even students. I remember, for instance, having a conference in one senior high school with a group of technical-shop boys who had been guinea pigs for our experiments in the comparative difficulty of structural morphological classification clues as opposed to traditional ways of recognizing and talking about such things as nouns and verbs and sentences. The boys were, incidentally, pleased to be asked to comment to a group of such elevated educators and eager to tell us how much "easier" the "new" grammar seemed to them. Even before trying out our materials, we had organized our first inservice course in the newer approaches to English-language teaching in secondary school. This pilot inservice course was offered after school, with state approval for two credits toward certificate renewal and salary increment. It was planned by the English supervisor in charge of this aspect of curriculum "expertise", with assists by nearby college consultants--many of whom were willing to serve as advisers with no honorarium. As a result of the teacher-evaluations of the course, it was modified and taught at a local college. The college hired the supervisor to teach the course; and the opportunity for teachers working toward degrees or advanced certificates to get graduate credit for the course, through the college, made it more available to a wider circle of teachers. This practice has been continued, in several other areas of inservice training in English such as the teaching of written composition or the relationships of literary criticism to the teaching of literature in secondary school. Now we have three colleges who regularly ask us to work with them in deciding what offerings we need, what instructors we can provide if they do not have the personnel. Some of the college offerings are scheduled in our school buildings. It is becoming a very practical way to improve inservice training as well as to strengthen the relations of college and school system. Unfortunately, however, many of these arrangements depend on the goodwill and interest of individual professors and staff members and do not necessarily reflect "institutional" change or approval.

Ever since the initial college-staff sponsored courses, we have made an increasing number and variety of inservice opportunities available to secondary teachers. We supply professional references to departments, for individual reading and group discussion in department meetings. We have had committees of teachers, administrators and supervisors working out plans for intervisitations among schools, one of the features included being demonstration lessons of new language activities and materials. We have invited consultants requested by teachers to speak at professional study day conferences--people of the national reputation of Henry Lee Smith or Albert Marckwardt and less well-known but equally helpful local consultants. We have cooperated closely with the City schools (a separate school system from those in Baltimore County) in their linguistic projects; and we have acted as a reservoir of school consultants in the linguistics institutes sponsored by local colleges--Mt. St. Agnes and the University of Maryland. Teachers have been involved throughout this phase of secondary school implementation and training in planning the curriculum, working out bulletins under the supervision of staff, evaluating the program through suggestions for change and revision, examination of commercially produced materials, giving and observing demonstration lessons, participating in group discussions and sharing of ideas.

The Growing Need for Elementary Inservice Assistance

The extended offerings for secondary teachers were broadened and made available to elementary teachers and administrators; and as a result a corps of both administrative-supervisory and teaching personnel in various elementary schools became available for special work in the language strand, K-6. From 1966 to the present, language workshop committees composed of supervisors, the coordinator of English, elementary vice-principals with participation in the inservice program or with subject matter courses in language study (including grammar) from college, and several classroom teachers produced a K-6 language guide that is essentially a self-contained grammar usage, and functionally applied language course of study, a revision of this guide, containing a newly structured primary program, and a bulletin written as a supplement to the K-6 language guide and intended to suggest ways to extend the language concepts away from grammar and usage into more comprehensive linguistic areas, and to illustrate

ways of relating knowledge about language to the improvement of reading, literature enjoyment, and composing. And we regard the participation in curriculum development as one of the most productive forms of cooperative inservice opportunity.

Experimental Try-out

These changes in curriculum were accompanied by try-out of materials in pilot schools, usually where members of the curriculum committees were teaching, evaluation by teacher-committees, and the development of inservice training activities aimed at developing sufficient background and readiness for use of these innovative materials. The inservice course for elementary teachers was modified in the summer of 1968 and used as a basis of two inservice courses taught specifically for elementary administrative-supervisory and teaching personnel. In spite of the fact that almost 400 teachers were enrolled in pilot courses before the end of 1968, the job of achieving readiness for county-wide implementation of the language program into one hundred elementary schools and over twenty junior high schools, was too expensive and ambitious an undertaking for even a fairly well-to-do school system to try on a short-term basis. It was at that time that the request for federal funds was made.

The initial suggestion that a request for outside funds be made came from our Supervisor of Federal Projects, who keeps the staff informed of opportunities for assistance relevant to special subject areas or departments within the system. You will recall that the Basic Studies Program had been exclusively for college-sponsored summer institutes and academic-year study in the various "basic" subject fields. Most of the participants had been secondary school teachers. When we had begun our pilot inservice course, planned and taught by members of our staff who had been involved in the development of the curriculum bulletins to be implemented, we had realized the enormity of our problem if the materials were well-received and used in the pilot schools. But when we checked on possibilities for federal or state aid at the time, we discovered that there were few avenues open to local school systems, and few available to elementary teachers and administrators--even in college-sponsored programs. (We did, at this time, try to get a nearby college--formerly the elementary training school--to sponsor a program to meet the needs of our elementary teachers and also of selected groups in Baltimore City, but we met with no success. The Education Department was willing,

but the English Department placed so many obstacles in our path--in the form of prerequisites for courses in the needed subject matter--that we abandoned that method of getting help.) If our materials had been ready for experimentation a little sooner, we might have applied for a grant under ESEA Title III (Innovative Programs), but ESEA was succeeded by EPDA, and in 1967, we were informed that it was possible to request a grant award directly to a local school system. We applied under Basic Studies because the program was specifically related to innovative subject matter and methodology in English.

Roles of Cooperating Personnel in EPDA Project

The proposal was duly planned, submitted, and approved. This year is the final year of operation. By the end of this year, almost all of our one hundred elementary schools will have sent either the principal or vice-principal or both to the summer training institute for elementary administrators or to one of the school-year courses attended by over a thousand teachers during a two-year period. But because my chief concern is with the kinds of cooperative patterns for inservice training rather than with detailed description of an actual project, I'd like to consider the kinds of people and institutions involved in the planning and implementation of the project.

The key people in our system in planning and developing programs are the Central Staff supervisors in the Division of Curriculum and Instruction. They have informal but close liaison with the English and Education Departments of at least six colleges nearby, ties with individual professors and--in some cases--with administrative personnel. The leadership in setting up the proposal came from the English Office, but at each stage in the plan teachers who had worked in curriculum development related to the project, administrators in elementary pilot schools already established, and college consultants were asked to assist in the actual writing of the rough draft. Pp. 24-25 of the brochure "The English Language in Elementary School Programs" provide an overview of the actual courses offered during the project.

Once the program got underway, the staff of the project itself represented the numerous groups--the instructors of the introductory courses for teachers being two of the

vice-principals from curriculum committees and pilot schools, the college consultants serving as lecturers in the workshop for administrators, one long-range consultant cooperating with the Director and staff as main lecturer for the Advanced Course, and another long-range college reading consultant directly involved both in planning the introductory course in linguistic approaches to beginning reading and in lecturing to the administrators and, on special occasions, to teachers in the school-year course. The staff instructors also serve as consultants to local schools.

The articles in the brochure are samples of the kinds of lectures given by consultants and staff during the summer workshop for elementary administrators, the key people in supervision and implementation of programs in our system and therefore the key people to bring in for intensive training in the summer before each successive wave of schools began program implementation in the fall. The lesson plans included in the brochure are plans used either by teachers in the schools, teachers demonstrating for participants in the courses, or by the summer institute demonstrating teacher--a permanent staff member, formerly a classroom teacher from a pilot school. Demonstrations by teachers and for teachers form an integral part of the inservice program, as do lectures by visiting guests and speakers.

Teachers and administrators have been involved also in the ongoing evaluation of the program. Several of the vice-principals and teachers enrolled in the Advanced Course last year took as their project the formulation of items for an entry-level test for fourth grade students using the new materials in classrooms where teachers participating in the inservice activities are teaching. The inventory used for written and oral evaluating of the inservice courses themselves was developed by a team of staff, administrators, and teachers--with college consultants also contributing. The Educational Testing Service provided expert help in the final form of the inventory and in the form of the entry level tests for students.

In addition to the course outlines and plans and projectuals and commercially produced materials we worked out together, each instructor has produced some of his own adaptations, and local school teams of administrators and teachers have worked out materials to use with

their faculties and with students.*

The limited scope of this paper makes it impossible to go into the varying roles of college consultants, administrator, staff supervisors and instructors, and teachers--but we have found that their close cooperation throughout the project has resulted in much closer ties between supervisory personnel and local school administrators, between college professor and school staffs, between secondary and elementary personnel, and--in cases where principals of local schools work closely with the community--in school public relations. We hope we have convinced the colleges who worked with us during the project that elementary teachers can learn what they need to know without cumbersome prerequisites in some areas, especially where the training they need and want is tailored for them by sympathetic and knowledgeable groups that include college, school staff, and classroom teachers. When these people plan together and then implement their own plans, they are secure in the knowledge that if one succeeds, all succeed and that any failures or weaknesses in the program are not the responsibility of any one group or of the purveyors of packaged panaceas, but are simply the inevitable and remediable flaws that any cooperative human endeavor produces.

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* If time permits, those who attend this meeting will have the opportunity to see some of these projectuals and slides brought along as samples.